

Discussion Items re: Strategic Analysis Coordination

Addressing the Quantitative Information Needs of Statewide Resource Policy Related to Water Management

Introduction

Recent policy discussions involving water resource management throughout California have identified the need for more complete and integrated quantitative information than has been used in the past (e.g., interest in developing broader performance measures for CBDA investments and a desire to evaluate multiple future scenarios for water demand in the California Water Plan). In order to develop this information, additional data and more sophisticated analysis techniques will be necessary. Multiple activities are underway now, but much work is needed to develop an analytical capability that is more responsive and more relevant to the policy discussions than currently exists.

Current Conditions

CBDA and member agencies are performing multiple analyses now to carry out their charge. In many cases, they are using models and analytical tools that were developed many years ago for different purposes than the questions the agencies are being asked to answer today. In some cases, stakeholders have been critical of existing models and are questioning their validity for application to the current broader policy questions.

As a result, the agencies must do the best they can to address the short-term needs with the analytical tools currently available, and at the same time they must start developing more robust and responsive analytical capabilities to evaluate evolving integrated resource management policies.

Need for Coordination

Given the broad areas of analytical expertise required to meet the needs of current information demands for policy, no single agency or group can possibly develop all of the new capability. More likely, each agency will leverage its strengths in collaboration with others to provide more responsive evaluation tools. However, given the emphasis on integrated analysis, and the necessity of using consistent theory and data sources, this effort will not succeed without close cooperation.

The other challenge stems from the fact that policy agendas tend to shift rapidly and be dominated by short-term issues. In contrast, it will take years to develop a consistent strategic analysis framework and the analytical tools necessary to provide the quantitative information being demanded by policy makers. This requires that some group develop and maintain a long-term view and provide the means to 'stay the course' if this advance in analytical capability is ever to be realized.

Early Ideas for Coordination

Current thinking regarding how this coordination could be achieved requires two groups:

- A technical review and oversight group
- A policy review and guidance group

The *Technical Review and Oversight Group* would consist of technical experts from member agencies and other groups that get into the details of analytical tool development. There would be at least one recognized expert for each theoretical discipline required in the new system. This group would be responsible to coordinate, guide, and guarantee that available resources are being dedicated to develop analytical tools with the most appropriate and the best available technology to address the long-term analytical needs of California. They would serve as the central point of contact for all stakeholder interaction regarding quantitative analysis (including analytical tool development, improvements and how they are being applied). They would serve as host for peer review as needed.

The *Policy Review and Guidance Group* would consist of high-level managers (and perhaps others) from within member agencies that recognize the need for providing better analysis capability to meet the long-term resource management needs of California. This group would interact with, and provide the authority to the *Technical Review and Oversight Group* to ensure that the tools continue to be developed, and that they will meet the policy needs in the future. This group must also find ways to fund the quantitative analysis development program.

In summary, the *Review and Guidance Group* will establish the “needs and requirements” in terms of what the new system must be able to do, and will provide the impetus to keep this development effort focused. The *Technical Review and Oversight Group* will determine the best way to do it, and then oversee the development.

Next Steps

The Department of Water Resources is planning to invite a few people together to discuss these ideas and to start developing a functional description of how these groups would be formed, what their specific roles and responsibilities would be, etc.

One topic for early discussion is to select a proper forum that can provide the qualified and focused input and interaction required to develop the new analysis capability, while supporting existing groups without duplicating effort or causing unnecessary conflicts.